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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED.

BY THE EDITOR, JAMES HUNEKER, FERRIS GREENSLET AND
CLAYTON HAMILTON.

"THE BALANCE OF POWER."*

"THE Balance of Power" is not a strong story; it is the story of a strong man, such as has been told better and less well many times. The central figure is rather more than a hero; he is a paragon, not perhaps "inevitable," as described in the book, but certainly irresistible. He begins his career, in the traditional manner, at the early age of five by thrashing a bigger boy, who spoke disrespectfully of a friend. It was a manly act, culminating in an improbable result, but serving, in a sort of prelude, as an index of the character of the model. Twenty years later, the same lad, now grown to man's estate and exceptional physical bulk, surmounted by a massive head, ugly features and protruding jaw, traditionally indicative of power, lives in a humble way with his Scotch mother in the same New England mill town. His worthy father has died of a broken heart caused by the loss of money in speculation. The boy has won his way through the high school, has declined the proffer of a position in a neighbor's store, because, apparently, he regarded the acceptance of it as an additional obligation, and has begun work as a common laborer in a mill whose owner, as might be suspected, is an irascible person who has an only daughter. Divested of unnecessary and irritating entanglements, the story of the progress of the paragon proceeds simply. He becomes assistant superintendent, then superintendent and, finally, general manager of the mill. Meanwhile, the concern itself has become embarrassed financially, and a rival mill-owner acquires a large number of shares in the corporation with the purpose of securing control and, presumably,

* "The Balance of Power." By Arthur Goodrich. New York: Outing Publishing Company.

of reducing the output and depriving men of employment. Our hero divines the intention; and, with the aid of the friend in whose behalf he fought his first battle, he too seeks proxies for the shareholders' election. Then the rival mill-owner, through a walking delegate, incites a strike, and our hero is obliged to cope with the situation single-handed. That he does so heroically and effectively, facing dangers with a calm and dauntless smile, may be assumed. Still, the rival mill-owner continues his machinations, and it becomes necessary for our hero to unmask him and present him to the people in his true colors as the real source of municipal political corruption and jobbery. The paragon is pledged to support the boy whom he thrashed in the prelude, as a candidate for Mayor; but the leaders of the popular party, of which he is a member, reach the conclusion that he himself is the man who can be elected, and determine upon his nomination without his knowledge. Fortunately for his own reputation, he hears of the plot in the nick of time; and, entering the convention, with no dramatic attempt, but with the simple, earnest words of a true man, sternly puts aside the crown. His friend is nominated, and he puts his broad shoulders back of the canvass. The climax comes on the night before election, when he is to put before his fellow citizens the terrific indictment he has prepared against the Pharisees who have stolen franchises and corrupted weak and lowly politicians. While on his way to the hall, he is attacked by a small regiment of ruffians and overpowered. There is another copy of the speech, however, and the candidate, taking advantage of the tragic circumstances and the mass of evidence, scores so heavily that his audience proceeds from the Opera House to tear up the car tracks and destroy other evidences of the gain achieved through political corruption, and the conspiring Pharisees sneak stealthily away to avoid too intimate association with lamp-posts. After a time our hero regains his senses, and from the steps of his boyhood's home acknowledges a mighty ovation tendered to him by his grateful fellow citizens, along with restoration of the union label which he had lost, and assurances that the men have returned to work. We must take for granted that the purification of municipal government thereupon became permanent, to the great joy of all except the grafters and grabbers of franchise.

But what of the miller's daughter? There is little to record

except that she formed the habit of appearing opportunely at critical junctures and producing the missing paper or whatever information was essential to the full performance of duty. Naturally enough, she was supposed to be in love with the lad who got the thrashing in the prelude and subsequently became Mayor, and it was not until the very last that our hero discovered inadvertently that he was the one whom she had loved all the time; and so, when we leave the paragon and the heroine, they are preparing to be married, to the satisfaction of all concerned and unconcerned.

"The Balance of Power" is a good story, despite its incongruities and the insufferable chatter of various aged gentlemen who persist in giving weak imitations of "David Harum" and "Eben Holden." The fact that the hero is a real hero is made evident so unobtrusively that the effort in no wise impairs interest in the character. Indeed, from the very beginning we *want* him to be a paragon. We should be disappointed if he were else in any respect. He wins and holds our sympathy. At no step do we have the slightest doubt of his ultimate triumph; but, instinctively, we wish to behold his success and in a certain sense participate in it. It is the human's inherent regard for strength and simplicity, and the conviction that those two qualities constitute the basis of impregnability, that bear one gladly along such a triumphal progress, however unreal it may seem in some of its aspects, however commonplace the environment and however ordinary the realism, so long as it be, as in this case, so well drawn as to make even the minor characters truly live. The key-note of the book is homely idealism, and it is uplifting. All that was required to make it a strong story, instead of a story of a strong man, was the service of an editor capable of eliminating superfluous verbiage, dovetailing incidents and interlacing the threads in such a manner that the narrative might have run along, if not altogether smoothly, at least without a surfeit of interruption.

THE EDITOR.

"LORDS AND LOVERS, AND OTHER DRAMAS."*

A NEW poet! Is it not something to say in these days of political alarms and the apotheosis of the commonplace in art and lit-

* "Lords and Lovers, and Other Dramas." By Olive Tilford Dargan. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.